

## Sacrifice

by DeBrabant

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Summary: A stranger takes Angel's place on the blade during Becoming...but just who was he? And why did he do it?

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>by Danii<br>

> Buffy pulled back the sword to strike. She<br>didn't want to do this; God, she didn't want to do  
>this. To have him come back, only to send him into<br>eternal torment. But it was that, or have the world  
>sucked head-first into hell. <br> God, she didn't want to do this.

> "Close your eyes"<br> God, she didn't want to do this.  
> She could hear a voice. It spoke in a language<br>which she didn't know. It was pleasant enough, but  
>unfamiliar, so she didn't give it any notice. <br> God, she didn't want to do this.

> She put her head down.<br> A blur.

> Buffy plunged the sword into Angel. Tears ran<br>down her face, and she raised her head to get a last

>look at the one she loved. But to Buffy's great<br>surprise, it was not Angel into which she had plunged

>the sword, but a tall, blonde man. The man smiled, a<br>sad smile, as Buffy stepped back to look around. On

>the ground next to the stranger was Angel, nursing a<br>cut in his arm, who looked up at Buffy.

> "What..." Buffy began, but stopped when she saw<br>a light. The light was brightening just above the

>unknown man, and the man, despite the sword in him,<br>looked up.

> "Natalie?" asked the man. It was then that<br>Buffy realized that it was his voice she had heard

>speaking only a few moments before. Buffy and Angel<br>both stood spellbound watching the man, the light, and

>the portal.<br> "Yes, Nick" issued a pleasant, female voice from

>the light, "You've earned your place here. You earned<br>it long ago, my knight. Come now."

> "Yes" answered the man who was obviously Nick,<br>and then a spasm of pain hit him from the portal to

>hell behind him. But just as it seemed he would be<br>sucked into the wormhole, a light left his body and

>joined the one above him. The eyes of the man, once a<br>sapphire blue, went blank and white as the light left,

>then the body was sucked down into hell. The portal<br>disappeared, as did the light, and Buffy and Angel

>were left, shaken, but alive.<br>

>"What-" began Buffy, but Angel shushed her as he<br>stood up.

> "Let's just be grateful" Angel said, walking<br>over to her, "Yes, I've remembered what happened. I

>am so sorry..."<br> It was at that point that Angel embraced her.

>Buffy returned the embrace gratefully, holding onto<br>him for dear life for fear that she would fall down

>from sheer exhaustion.<br> "But, who was he?" asked Buffy, pulling her head

>up to look at Angel's face, "Do you know who he was?"<br> "I didn't get a good look, but there was

>something familiar about him. I might have seen him,<br>but I can't remember where." Angel's look of

>wondering turned to a smile, "But, I wish I could<br>thank him. For all he has given me back."

> At that point Angel's mouth met Buffy's in a<br>kiss, which they continued for a bit. When they both

>came up for air, Buffy asked.<br> "Can we get out of here? I'd really like to see

>how Xander and Giles are doing."<br> Angel was nonplussed for a minute, but then

>remembered.<br> "I forgot all about them! Yes, we'd better find

>them. Make sure they're all right!" Angel answered,<br>starting to make for the exit. But as he walked over,

>he tripped on something lying on the floor.<br> "What the-"

> Buffy walked over and picked up the item Angel<br>had tripped on. It was a set of keys, with a note

>attached. Buffy read it out loud.<br> "Green caddy outside. Check the trunk if you

>want answers"<br> Buffy looked to Angel. Angel shrugged and held

>his hands out for the keys. Buffy handed them over,<br>and put her arm around Angel, whose own arm had

>already healed. <br> "Let's go home."

><br>

> When they got outside, they found Xander and<br>Giles (well, mostly Giles) resting on the very car the

>note was about. Both men looked up when they heard<br>the foot steps, and both tensed up when they saw

>Angel.<br> "Is he evil?" Xander asked, with his usual

>intelligence and tact.<br> "What do you think, Xander?" answered Buffy,

>hugging Angel even closer to her.<br> "Just checking" answered Xander, ignoring or

>perhaps entirely missing the note of anger in Buffy's<br>voice.

Buffy then disengaged from Angel and walked  
>over to Giles, who looked to be in a bad way.<br> "You okay?" she  
asked simply, her hand resting  
>lightly on his shoulder in the event that he should be<br>injured  
there.  
> "I am fine, Buffy" Giles said, waving her<br>concern away,  
"However, to be honest, I don't believe  
>I will be able to walk all the way."<br> Buffy smiled. "You won't  
have to. We happen to  
>have the keys to the car you're sitting on. Well,<br>actually, Angel  
has the keys"  
> The terror that had found its way to Giles<br>battered face at the  
idea of Buffy driving erased  
>itself quickly. Curiosity took over.<br> "And how did you acquire  
those?" asked the  
>Watcher.<br> "The owner saved me" answered Angel, "He took  
>the sword instead of me. His body was sucked into<br>hell to stop  
the world from being sucked in."  
> "But how is that possible? Only the blood of the<br>one who opened  
it..."  
> As Giles spoke, Angel looked at the cut on his<br>arm. Perhaps what  
Angel had thought was a slight  
>mistake was actually a highly important, calculated<br>part of the  
stranger's plan.  
> "The guy was saying something in Latin before I<br>tried to stab  
Angel..." Buffy injected.  
> Giles looked at both Buffy and Angel. "It is<br>possible that he  
transferred the...whatever... to  
>himself to the point where only the blood, and not the<br>death, of  
he who opened it was needed."  
> Angel nodded. That made sense. <br> "But who would VOLUNTEER to be  
stabbed and sent  
>to hell in Angel's place!?" Again, Xander astounded<br>everyone with  
his lack of tact. Buffy figured it must  
>have rubbed off from Cordelia.<br> Angel pulled out the keys and  
showed the two  
>others the note. <br> "Let's find out..."  
><br>  
> Giles, who was more curious than hurt, got up<br>from the bumper so  
that Angel could open the trunk.  
>Angel slipped the key in as soon as the Watcher got<br>up, and  
turned it. Almost surprisingly, it worked.  
>The trunk mechanism was obviously well taken care of,<br>for some  
reason, and didn't require any further effort  
>to open it.<br> Inside the opened trunk was some packages,  
  
>ranging in size from that which could contain a<br>toaster to that  
which could comfortably hold a decent  
>sized television. On top of the parcels, was a<br>manilla envelope  
with the words "Read me first"  
>scribbled upon it. Angel reached in and took the<br>envelope.  
> All were focused upon Angel as he opened the<br>manilla envelope to  
find a large bundle of papers. A  
>sticky note on the top of the stack had a few<br>directions. It  
read:  
> "If you are reading this, then you must be alive<br>and moderately  
well. The contents of this are very  
>important. I think it would be better if you drove<br>the car to the  
hospital and read it all together with  
>the others, Cordelia, Willow, and Oz. You can take<br>the car, as I

stated above. The gas tank is full.  
>Safe driving."<br>  
> Xander, who had been reading over Angel's<br>shoulder, even though the vampire had been reading  
>aloud, was impressed.<br> "Wow" he said with an impressed 'huh',  
"This guy  
>had it ALL planned out."<br> Giles gave him a withering look.  
> "Let's just get in the car and find out who the<br>bloody hell this person was!" exclaimed the Watcher.  
> Buffy and Xander agreed and piled in. Angel<br>waited so as to help Giles into a seat. He then  
>popped into the driver's seat. <br> "Angel" Xander asked, a hint of fear in his  
>voice, "How long since you last drove?"<br> Angel gave him a disgusted look. "Two weeks"  
> Buffy was surprised. "In what?"<br> "In a car, in MY car!" exclaimed Angel, "I do  
>have a car. It's a '63 like this one, but black. <br>Great trunk space in one of these. I use it to hide  
>when I get caught out in the day. Just open the<br>trunk, hop in, and fall asleep until dark. I'd be  
>surprised to find that no other vampires do it."<br>  
>"So, you're saying, some guy just pushed Angel<br>aside, took a sword to the heart, got sucked into  
>hell, and he left you a car?"<br> That would be Cordelia. The little group had  
>arrived 5 minutes before, and upon entering, explained<br>the whole story.  
> "And the spell worked?" asked Willow from her<br>hospital bed, "He got his soul back?"  
> "Well, Angel hasn't tried to tear our throats<br>out, so I'm guessing it worked..." answered Buffy.  
> "Wow" gasped Willow, "I did it."<br> Buffy leaned over and hugged her wounded friend.  
><br> "Yeah, Will. You did it."  
> "So" exclaimed Xander, completely destroying the <br>moment, "Let's check out the envelope!"  
> "Indeed" said Giles.<br> Angel handed the envelope to Giles, who opened it  
>gently and pulled out the large bunch of papers<br>within. His first look went to the stationary.  
> "DeBrabant Foundation?" Giles asked to the<br>general public, "Isn't that one of the largest private  
>charity foundations in the world?"<br> No one else had any idea what he was talking  
>about, except for Angel.<br> "Yes" he answered, "And didn't you mention to me  
>that it also gave money to the Watchers?"<br> "Right!" Giles said, "1 million a year towards  
>our work. None of the Watchers ever knew why he would<br>chose to do so, or even how Mr. DeBrabant knew of us."  
> "Hmmm."<br> "Yes. Anyway," the Watcher continued, "Let's  
>get on with it and find out some more about our<br>mystery man."  
> Giles read the letter aloud:<br> "My name is Nicholas DeBrabant. That is the  
>name I was born with, and that is the name I wish to<br>die with. If you are reading this, I am no longer in  
>the land of the living, meaning everything worked<br>correctly. You are probably wondering who I am, and  
>why I would chose to do as I have done. All this will<br>be

explained in the following pages. I would guess  
>that Mr. Giles would be reading it now, and if my<br>guess is  
correct, I would wish that he would continue  
>to read it till I state otherwise. <br> "I will begin at the  
beginning. As I said  
>before, I was born Nicholas DeBrabant, in the year of<br>1196-"  
> "1196?!?!" exclaimed Xander, "That isn't<br>possible! That would  
make him 800 or something!"  
> "I am sure he will explain in due time" said<br>Giles, trying to  
quiet the boy, then he continued to  
>read:<br> "My home was in Belgium. My family ruled the  
>duchy of Brabant. I was the first son of a brood of<br>12, though 10  
of these died from a sickness that swept  
>through the area at the time. It left my youngest<br>sister, mother,  
father, and myself. But I soon left,  
>for I was required, as a man of stature, to train as a<br>knight.

> "After I finished my training, I was sent with a<br>missionary  
group to the land of the Celts, in an  
>attempt to convert them to Christianity. However, I<br>was also sent  
there for another reason. News of a  
>young girl with immense talents in the arts of<br>fighting had come  
to me, and I had to investigate, for  
>I was, as you are Mr. Giles, a Watcher."<br>  
>There was considerable brow-raising at that last<br>sentence,  
especially from Giles, whose look could not  
>be described, but was akin to one worn by those who<br>have found  
out that their new room mate is a psycho  
>killer escaped from jail. Well, similar, but a little<br>different.

> "A Watcher?" aksed Buffy, as if Giles had made up<br>the last part  
as a joke, "You sure?"  
> Rupert gave her a withering look. "That's what<br>it says..."  
> "Well then," said Xander anxiously,"let's move on<br>instead of  
getting stuck on the Watcher thing, eh?"  
> The entire room looked at Xander, but it was<br>Buffy who actually  
voiced the group's thought.  
> "That is the most intellegent thing you've said<br>all day."  
> Xander just gave her a dismissive glance and<br>bobbed his head at  
Giles, urging him to move on.  
> "I was, as my father was, a Watcher. I was<br>ordered to find the  
girl, and if she turned out to be  
>the Slayer, I was to be promoted to the place of<br>active Watcher,  
an honor my family had had only once  
>before.<br>But on the way there, at one of the towns at which we

>were to spread the message of Jesus, I met a young<br>woman names  
Gwyneth, with whom I fell in love.  
> "She was a priestess of the Celts. We were two<br>different types,  
but in love, we saw only the  
>similarities. We weren't going to hurt anyone,<br>merely run away  
together, but my commanding officer,  
>who saw our affair as dangerous, killed her, and<br>shifted the  
blame to me. As penance, I was sent to  
>the Crusades, and for blowing my operation, I was put<br>down on the  
list of Watchers. I fought for a year in  
>the Crusades, was captured and held for two more, then<br>was freed  
in the year 1228.  
> "The higher ups in the Watchers needed me for<br>something, for I  
was one of the only noble born

>Watchers, and sent for me to come to Paris. I was so<br>overjoyed at seeing the city once more, my friends and  
>I decided to celebrate. We went to one of the better<br>inns and got completely drunk on the city's fine wine.  
> It was at this time, a beautiful woman approached me<br>and asked me this question, the question I have  
>replayed in my mind so many times that I could never<br>forget it. She asked me: 'How much do you want me?'  
> "I never remembered what I answered, but it was<br>definatly something good, for she brought me to the  
>back room. There we made love, as she whispered to me<br>of power, youth, hunger, darkness, and the night.  
>Then, almost as quickly as she came, she left. She<br>returned however, with a man. His hair was  
>white-blonde, short, and his eyes were like ice. He<br>was tall, and commanding, as if he were the leader of  
>a great army. He once had been. His name was<br>LaCroix. Once a general of Caesar's army, it was he  
>that made me what I am, or was: a vampire. He brought<br>me across. He became my master that night, and it was  
>at that point that my life became a living hell..."<br><br> "Hmmm..."  
> "Oh dear..."<br> "Hmmm..."  
> "Sucks for him..." The members of the little<br>group gave their respective death looks to Xander, the  
>speaker of this comment. When Xander got a clue and<br>noticed the angry eyes on him, he nervously tittered,  
>"Well, continue..."<br> "Well, actually" said the Watcher as he removed  
>his glasses and rubbed his eyes, "It requests here<br>that Angel take over reading. Angel?"  
> As Giles spoke this last part, he neatened the<br>papers and held them out for the vampire to take.  
> Angel solomnly took the bundle, and began<br>reading. It went on for a while, for it told of  
>Nick's life as a vampire. None in the group<br>interrupted, not even Xander, as Angel read aloud the  
>life of the vampire, no, the man, who had saved them<br>from so much grief. And none knew weither it was the  
>words themselves, or the way that Angel spoke them,<br>but each was touched in some way. They all had felt  
>as he had felt a some point.<br> Buffy knew what it was like to be something she  
>never wanted to be. She lived with being a Slayer<br>everyday, without choice. Willow knew what it was  
>like to be persecuted for being different. For<br>believing things, and acting differently. Angel and  
>Oz knew the pain of having a monster inside you, one<br>that could hurt people, the people you loved, even if  
>you didn't want to. Giles and Angel knew the pain of<br>guilt from heinous acts which could never be washed  
>away. And Xander, Xander knew the pain of abuse. Of<br>abuse from a parent who was supposed to love you and  
>protect you, but instead caused you pain and misery<br>like no one else. Xander, the joker, who's only  
>defense was to laugh, knew how that man had felt, and<br>for 800 years no less, constantly trying to escape the  
>pain, but always feeling a yearning to come back, to<br>please, to submit the one who hurt him because, no  
>matter what, he was your father. <br> But, what balanced it, what

obviously kept the  
>man, no, Nicholas, from going insane, was his hope. <br>His faith in  
a better tomorrow. That unbreakable  
>confidence that it couldn't get any worse, only<br>better. That he  
would find the answer. That he would  
>find joy, and love, and happiness. That he would find<br>a way out.  
And, as they reached page 21, it seemed as  
>if Nicholas had found his happiness, at least to some<br>degree.  
> "I awoke on a slab in a morgue, hungry and in<br>pain. I got up,  
much to the surprise of the young  
>coroner who was to autopsy me, and took a plastic<br>container of  
blood from the fridge. My fangs were  
>bared and my eyes were glowing from the pain of the<br>explosion. To  
my amazement, the young lady examiner  
>didn't run. As I prepared to drink, she asked me what<br>I was, and  
I replied simply that I was something much  
>different than her. She approached me, tried to touch<br>me, but I  
grabbed her hand. I then touched her hand  
>to my cheek. She said I was cold. I replied that I<br>was dead. She  
countered that I was not. I then  
>hypnotized her, as I explained my kind can do, to make<br>her forget  
me and what I was, then left.  
> "A few nights later, I decided to test the little<br>coroner. I  
brushed past her in the street. She  
>didn't pass. She remembered. I told her she should<br>forget. She  
didn't wish to. Then she did the most  
>remarkable thing. Without fear, or requesting for<br>payment, she  
offered to help me. And the world was  
>turned upside down."<br>  
>"She decided to work on a cure for me. A cure for<br>vampirism. But  
she also became my best friend. Her  
>name was Natalie-<br> "That's the name!" Buffy exclaimed.  
> "Of what?"<br> "That's who he was talking to. The voice in the  
  
>light!"<br> Angel nodded. "Yeah, before he died, he called the  
  
>name 'Nat' or 'Natalie'. I don't remember exactly,<br>but I bet  
that's her. Notice the past tense..."  
> "Go on" said Giles, obviously curious for the end of<br>the man's  
tale.  
> "Lambert. I worked in Toronto as a police detective,<br>homicide  
division, for that time, so my frequent  
>visits to the morgue were at least justifiable. It<br>was one of the  
many jobs I had taken over the years,  
>as you know, trying to atone for all<br>the pain I had cause. And it  
seemed, that just maybe,  
>I had been given a blessing. Her. She helped me so<br>much, not just  
in looking for a cure, but making me  
>see that I wasn't an evil monster. That I was<br>separate from the  
beast inside me. That there was  
>hope. And then, gradually, we fell in love."<br> "So, did he have  
the gypsy curse thingy you have,  
>Angel?" interrupted Xander, "I mean, the whole thing<br>sounds awful  
familiar..."  
> Angel looked at Xander, disgusted. "Didn't you<br>listen. His kind  
is different. They already have a  
>soul. He explained the whole thing!"<br> "You see," Buffy  
interjected at this point, "I still  
>don't get this vamp-with-a-soul thing."<br> "Let's try it again"  
said Giles with a sigh, "In the

>beginning, when a vampire was first created, it had a<br>soul. It's first vampiric child, a sorceress of some  
>power, did not want her actions as a vampire to affect<br>the status of her soul. And so she gave up some of  
>her vampiric powers so that her soul would be judged<br>then, instead of after she had been a vampire for  
>some years, and replaced her soul with a demon. After<br>that, all the vampires which she made were like her,  
>souless and completely demonic. It was then that the<br>Slayer was created."

> "And?"<br> "Nicholas is the descendant of the first vampire, and if this testimony is correct, specifically the<br>name of the master's master's master, then he just  
>might have a very close relation indeed! All the<br>other children of the first became like him, with  
>those extra powers and complete with souls."<br> "Whoa..."  
> "Yes" he sighed once more, "'Whoa' indeed."<br> "And his kind can do all that extra stuff? Flying?  
>Hypnosis? That mind thing?"<br> "That is what he claims..."  
> "There are tons of that other type of vampire?"<br> Giles simply glanced at her.

> Buffy looked at Angel. "Continue"<br> "But we could never consummate, for if we did, then my  
>master, LaCroix" Xander grimaced unconsciously "would<br>kill her, or bring her across, and I didn't want that to<br>happen to her. Not only that, but there was a chance,  
>a very large chance, that I would lose my control<br>during our act of love and kill her from bloodlust.  
>I loved her far too much to let either happen. So we<br>stayed platonic, much to the wonderment of our  
>co-workers. <br> "And we had our success and our pit-falls. I even

>found a cure for a day, but it was only a fix. It<br>only suppressed the symptoms for so long, and it was  
>highly addictive. But just as it seemed all hope was<br>lost, my vampiric sister, Janette, of whom I have  
>told, came to Toronto. She was trying to avenge the<br>death of the man she had loved, a man who had saved  
>her life in a fire. Surprisingly, that man had been a<br>mortal. And even more surprisingly, she was mortal."  
><br> "What!"

> Every set of eyes in the room turned and looked<br>at Angel as if he had grown a third head.

> "That's what it says..." he defended, pointing<br>at the paper, "She had become mortal."

> "Okay, okay, now this is wild!" Buffy exclaimed<br>frantically, "Vampires can't turn back! The-they just

>can't!"<br> "Read on, man, read on!" That was Giles, trying  
>to find out the how and why of the situation.<br> Angel nodded at Giles, then began where he had

>left off.<br> "Through controlled feeding from the man she  
>loved, and a major trauma, she had regained mortality,<br>the one thing I had wanted for so many years. She

>told me that, despite her prior teasing, that I had<br>been right to search for mortality. However, due to

>circumstances concerning her revenge, I had to take<br>away her mortality in order to save her life. I don't

>believe she ever forgave me...<br> "After these events, there was more backsliding,

>as my control deteriorated and my love for Natalie<br>grew. I knew I



would have to move on soon, so that no  
>one noticed I wasn't aging, and I was torn about<br>bringing Natalie  
with me. But, it all came to a head  
>one night, when Natalie told me that she couldn't wait<br>any  
longer. She said that she loved me, and that if  
>we didn't admit our love soon, it was over. She told<br>me to try  
Janette's cure, to drink from her.  
> "But, despite my love for her, I couldn't contain<br>the beast  
inside of me, and I drank too much of her.  
>My master, LaCroix" (another uncontious motion from<br>Xander)  
"came then, telling me to bring her across. I  
>said that I would not subject her to the hell I had<br>tried to  
relieve myself of for the last 200 years.  
>Then, I asked him to kill me. So that I could be with<br>her in  
death.  
> "I held her in my arms, her dying body still<br>warmer than my own,  
and awaited the stake that would  
>bring me to judgement. But it never came. And I had<br>promised,  
once, never to commit suicide. So, I was  
>stuck here, alone, and with nothing to guide me.<br> "I had to move  
on, and I contacted the person who  
>forges the documents. He told me that a good place<br>would be  
California, not in LA, but a little town  
>called Sunnydale. Said that there were always alot of<br>houses open  
there to buy."  
> "And the ancient Watcher was unaware that the<br>little town is  
right on top of the hellmouth?" (do I  
>need to tell you who this is? Or what happens<br>afterward?)  
> "Ahem. Now, I knew that the hellmouth was in<br>Sunnydale. Any  
Watcher, undead or alive, worth his  
>salt knows this. But, I saw his suggestion as a sign,<br>a sign that  
this might be the way I could help the  
>world again, through my Watcher roots. So I came to<br>Sunnydale as  
Nicholas Fynn, and moved into a house  
>near the school. <br> "One night, as I was flying back to my home, I  
  
>saw something strange going on in the library. It was<br>late at  
night, and all the lights were on. Curious, I  
>stopped, watched and listened. That's how I found out<br>about all  
of you. And as soon as I realized the  
>situation, I decided that my work would be to help<br>you. So I  
did."  
> "What? I don't remember seeing that guy before<br>tonight!" Buffy  
exclaimed.  
> Giles looked at Buffy, then at Angel. He didn't<br>even have to say  
it any more.  
> "I worked in secret, staying hidden. Your Slayer<br>and Watcher  
senses don't pick up my kind. It's one of  
>the reasons I ended up as I did. But I was there,<br>picking up the  
extra bad guys when you wouldn't  
>notice. Leaving strategically placed bookmarks for<br>you. Things  
like that. I even bought The Bronze so  
>that you would never be fined for property damage<br>(that and so  
you always had a table) and used the  
>profits to pay the school for it's damages. And I was<br>reasonably  
happy with what I had done.  
> "I was happy for Angel and Buffy, a couple<br>similar to Natalie  
and myself. For Giles, who had  
>conquered who he had been before. For Willow, who had<br>become so  
much more vibrant. For Xander. For Oz. I

>watched and I worked, and I grew to know and love all  
>of you from a distance. Then, when Angel lost his  
>soul, I had to help you even more.<br> "I'm so sorry I never saved  
Ms. Calender, Giles.  
>I didn't know Angelus was after her, and for that, I<br>am eternally  
sorry. But, despite how much it hurt to  
>do the work now, I did it. Then came tonight. <br> "I decided I was  
going to finally join Natalie  
>this night, saving the world and your love in the<br>process. I  
looked into my old books and found a  
>shifting spell, that would shift the burden of<br>sacrifice from  
Angel to myself. However, for the  
>spell to work, I still needed Angel's blood to be on<br>the blade. I  
worked it out in my mind. And now, I  
>guess it worked if you are reading this. Nicholas De<br>Brabant,  
Watcher, Crusader, Detective, Professor,  
>Doctor, Sinner, is gone, finally dead. Thus ends my<br>testamony.  
And I say to you all to never fear love,  
>and be true to your feelings. Don't wait, and don't<br>give up. "

> "That it?"<br> "Well...wait, here's some more papers..."

#### ><br>Epilogue

><br>Giles was fixing up the library. With all the spilt  
>shelves and the such, there was a great deal to be<br>done. Not to  
mention the new books. Nicholas, in his  
>great kindness, had left Giles the entirety of his<br>occult book  
collection, which was an admirable one.  
>The ancient former Watcher had possessed books which<br>were thought  
to be imaginary, books which hadn't been  
>discovered, and a great deal of first editions. He'd<br>already  
gotten a commendation for the "find" from the  
>Watcher's Council, even when he explained the source. <br>That had  
lead to even more praise, for findind a lost  
>watcher. All in all, it hadn't been a bad week on the<br>Hellmouth.

><br>Not that the money wasn't also a treat. DeBrabant had  
>left each of them a sizeable chunk of his money,<br>though the  
foundation still had the majority and  
>continued it's charity work despite it's leader's<br>demise. The  
leadership of the foundation had been  
>left to Angel and an unknown banker. Giles wished the<br>vampire  
luck with the work, and hoped that directing  
>the charity would help Angel to get rid of some of  
his<br>considerable guilt.  
><br>They'd each been left things like that, things which  
>fitted them, other than the money. Buffy had received<br>a cross  
which had once belonged to Joan of Ark. It  
>did quiet a wammy on the vampires, and seemed to work<br>even better  
than a normal cross did. Xander had  
>received DeBrabant's car, and a duck lamp which<br>obviously had  
sentamental value. Xander took to both,  
>and wouldn't let anyone move the lamp from it's sacred<br>spot at  
his seat in the library. Willow now had  
>several more artifacts, spellbooks, and other such<br>things than  
she had had before, and her boyfriend, Oz,  
>had received a entertainmentsound system which the  
>werewolf assured them was the finest money could buy. <br>Not to  
mention the motorcycle. Cordy had gotten a  
>number of dresses and the phone numbers of several<br>exclusive

designers, which a note attached had assured  
>were genuine and gotten from "a trusted friend". All<br>in all, a  
very good week.

><br>It was just as he was inserting "Rodgetter's Spotting  
>Guide for Fyarl Demons" that Giles felt an itch. It<br>was the sort  
of dangerous itch one usually gets  
>between the shoulder blades, but this one seemed<br>focused on his  
neck. Moving very slowly to disguise  
>the grabbing of a stake, Giles turned around.<br>  
>Standing a few feet away was a stranger. He certainly<br>wasn't a  
student. The man was dressed in a black  
>Armani suit, which was held at the neck by a silver<br>dagger pin.  
The face above the suit was pale and  
>hard, and contained two gleaming pieces of blue ice<br>where one  
usually finds eyes. His hair was cut short,  
>and was only slightly more pale than his face. The<br>stranger  
waited a second before speaking.

><br>"Are you Mister Rupert Giles?" he asked in a smooth  
>voice which rang with control.<br>  
>"Yes" answered Giles as he stood. He kept the stake<br>behind his  
back, but managed to look calm.

><br>"Pleased to meet you. My name is Lucien LaCroix. I  
>am sure Nicholas informed you of who, and what I am?"<br>  
>"Indeed he did, sir" replied Giles, trying to keep<br>his cool. If  
what the man said was true, he was  
>dealing with a 2000 year old master vampire. His<br>survival chances  
were similar to that of a lemming, or  
>rather, a lemming within 2 feet of a cliff. "And if<br>you are what  
you say you are, sir, I doubt that  
>meeting you is a pleasure. At least that is what I<br>have found."

><br>The man who called himself LaCroix laughed. "Please  
>stop with that piece of wood behind your back. If I<br>wanted you  
dead, you would be dead. I am here to talk  
>only. I don't want anything from you or anyone in<br>this hellhole."

><br>"Hellmouth."  
><br>"Whatever."  
><br>"Alright" said Giles after a moment. He dropped the  
>stake to the floor, "What do you wish to speak to me<br>about?"

><br>Lacroix looked a bit out of sorts, but answered  
>quickly. "I simply want you to answer a question."<br>  
>"And what is that?"<br>  
>"Did he meet her? Did he have a smile on his face<br>when he went?  
Did he go with her?" The questions  
>were asked in an anxious rush which bellied the cool<br>exterior.

><br>But then, Giles realized, it didn't. The exterior was  
>a mask. The coldness a defense. Those hands, which<br>he had assumed  
were clenched in power were actually  
>white at the knuckles, and clenched in an effort to<br>hold in his  
emotions. That face, so pale, was pale  
>from weariness, and grief, from holding it in so hard<br>that not a  
trace of the his pain would squeeze out  
>into view. And that was what filled this creature:<br>pain. Pain so  
intense, multiplied by the need for  
>controlling the emotion. It was not whimsy which had<br>made this  
LaCroix come, but a deep seated need to ease  
>his pain, fear, grief, and even his guilt.<br>

>"I am told" answered the Watcher slowly, "That he was<br>taken into  
the light by a female spirit which he  
>called 'Nat' and that he did indeed breath his last<br>with a smile  
on his face."  
><br>Giles felt the release even if there were no signs on  
>the outside other than a curt nod. He had no time to<br>ask  
anything, though, because the figure disappeared a  
>second later. Giles stared after him for a second,<br>then turned  
around and slowly kneeled to the ground  
>once more and pushed in "Rottinghamton's Occult<br>Annecdotes" with  
a mechanical movement.  
><br>"All in all," he said to himself after a minute "a  
>very good week."<br>>Fin!!!<br>> <p><p>

End  
file.